

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 222014Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9495

S E C R E T SANTO DOMINGO 5194

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, DR

SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT AND THE FUTURE POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: A. SD 5184 B. SD 5193

1. DURING THE CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT BALAGUER REPORTED REFTEL, THE DISCUSSION TURNED TO THE QUESTIONS OF "PERPETUAL" SUCCESSION ("CONTINUISMO"), NATIONAL RECONCILIATION OF OPPOSING FORCES, AND FURTHER SOCIAL REFORM.

2. I DESCRIBED BRIEFLY TO THE PRESIDENT MY ROUND OF TALKS WITH LEADERS

OF ALL LEGITIMATE POLITICAL PARTIES AND SAID FRANKLY THAT WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS I HAD FOUND THEM TO BE A MEDIOCRE LOT. THEY HAD IMPRESSED ME AS SMALL-TIME POLITICAL HACKS, VERY FEW OF THEM OF ANY STATURE AT ALL. ON THE OTHER HAND, I HAD MET A NUMBER OF MEN OF QUALITY IN BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE WHO WERE NOT BALAGUER SUPPORTERS AND I WAS PERPLEXED AS TO HOW THESE ELEMENTS COULD EXPRESS THEMSELVES POLITICALLY, SINCE THEY COULD HAVE LITTLE CONFIDENCE IN THE CALIBRE OF OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP.

I WAS ALSO IMPRESSED BY THE DEPTH OF PASSION THAT PERMEATED THE DOMINICAN BODY POLITIC AND SAW LITTLE EVIDENCE OF EFFORT ON THE PART OF DOMINICANS, WHOSE HISTORY FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY WAS REplete WITH POLITICAL TRAGEDY, TO AVOID A REPETITION OF THE PAST BY CONSTRUCTING BROAD-BASED MODERATE PARTIES AMONG WHICH POWER COULD CHANGE PEACEABLY. I ALSO NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH THE OPPOSITION HAD LATCHED ONTO THE THEME OF "CONTINUISMO" AS A

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RALLYING POINT, I HAD ALSO ENCOUNTERED MANY MODERATE DOMINICANS WHO WERE SINCERELY UNEASY OVER THE PROSPECT OF BALAGUER PERPETUATING HIMSELF IN POWER UNTIL HE DIED IN OFFICE OR WAS OTHERWISE REMOVED. FINALLY, I OBSERVED THAT MANY DOMINICANS

I HAD MET BELIEVED MORE SOCIAL/ECONOMIC REFORM SUCH AS THE AGRARIAN REFORM WAS NEEDED.

3. THE PRESIDENT WARMED TO THE SUBJECT AND SAID HE WOULD SPEAK FRANKLY AS A FRIEND AND IN CONFIDENCE. (DURING THIS PORTION OF THE CONVERSATION, IT BECAME UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR THAT BALAGUER HAS DECIDED TO RUN AGAIN, DESPITE HIS EARLIER CAREFUL STATEMENT THAT HE WAS UNDECIDED). HE SAID THAT HE WAS OF COURSE AWARE OF THE CRITICISM EMBODIED IN "CONTINUISMO" BUT HE THOUGHT IT EXAGGERATED BY THE POLITICIANS, ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MANY WERE ALSO SINCERE IN THEIR DISQUIETUDE. ON THE OTHER HAND THE COUNTRY NEEDED FOUR MORE YEARS OF POLITICAL STABILITY, HE THOUGHT, WHICH WOULD ENABLE IT TO CONTINUE ITS PROGRESS. ACCORDINGLY, HE HAD DECIDED TO RECOMMEND PUBLICLY BEFORE THE MAY ELECTION THAT THE CONSTITUTION BE AMENDED, EFFECTIVE 1978, TO PROVIDE FOR A SINGLE FIVE-YEAR PRESIDENTIAL TERM WITH SUCCESSION BARRED. (IN 1978, BALAGUER WILL BE 71.) HE HOPED THAT IN THE POLITICAL REALM THE NEXT FOUR YEARS COULD BE DEDICATED TO EASING POLITICAL PASSIONS AND TO BUILDING TWO OR PERHAPS THREE MODERATE PARTIES (HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE RECENT VENEZUELAN EXPERIENCE) AND TO THE CONTINUED EDUCATION OF THE MILITARY AS TO THEIR APOLITICAL ROLE. HE ENVISIONED BRINGING MEN INTO THE GOVERNMENT NEXT TERM WHO WERE CAPABLE BUT WITH LITTLE OR NO POLITICAL EXPERIENCE SO THAT THEY COULD GAIN SUCH EXPERIENCE AND PERHAPS TAKE OVER THE LEADERSHIP OF EXISTING PARTIES OR CREATE NEW ONES. HE WOULD CHOOSE SUCH MEN FROM DIFFERENT POLITICAL CURRENTS. FINALLY, HE BELIEVED ALSO THAT SOCIAL REFORM HAD TO BE PURSUED. TAX REFORM WAS TOUGH POLITICALLY BUT IMPERATIVE, HE CONCLUDED.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT MADE A POINT OF SAYING THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS CONVERSATION TO GO BEYOND THE WALLS OF HIS OFFICE, HE KNOWS FROM HIS EXTENSIVE DIPLOMATIC EXPERIENCE THAT I WOULD REPORT THE CONVERSATION. AT THE EMBASSY, ONLY THE DCM (AND MY SECRETARY AND COMMUNICATORS, OF COURSE) IS PRIVY TO THIS SENSITIVE INFORMATION. I WOULD ASK THE DEPT READERSHIP TO BE ESPECIALLY DISCREET SINCE MY GROWING RELATIONSHIP  
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WITH BALAGUER IS AT STAKE.

5. IF ALL COMES ABOUT AS BALAGUER EXPRESSED HIS PLANS, WE ARE IN FOR AN INTERESTING AND CONSTRUCTIVE FOUR YEAR TERM. THE DOMREP BEING WHAT IT IS, HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE IMPRUDENT EVER TO BE SANGUINE. MERRY CHRISTMAS.  
HURWITCH

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 10 MAY 1999  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL PARTIES, ELECTIONS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 22 DEC 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** martinjw  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Page Count:** 2  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Reference:** A. SD 5184 B. SD 5193  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** martinjw  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 01 FEB 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <01-Feb-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <20 FEB 2002 by martinjw>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** THE PRESIDENT AND THE FUTURE POLITICAL SITUATION  
**TAGS:** PINT, DR  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005